

Fishing Tournament, Contest and Clinic Summary Fall, 2007

Purpose:

To solicit advice and input from the Regional Advisory Councils and the Wildlife Board on Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) direction concerning the following: Fishing Tournaments, Fishing Contests and Fishing Clinics.

Background:

Interest has increased over the last year to change some of the rules associated with fishing tournaments and contests. After reviewing some of the proposed changes, the DWR also believes that adjustments are needed. The DWR is very concerned with angler recruitment and retention. License sales in recent years have declined and the DWR is very interested in taking all necessary steps to have a positive effect on license sales. This topic is primarily a social issue with some biological ramifications. As such, the DWR is requesting input and direction from the public, RAC's and Wildlife Board regarding management of tournaments, contests and clinics.

Discussion:

- *Fishing Tournaments:* Tournaments are generally money oriented fishing events that require a substantial fee to enable the contestant to participate. Tournaments provide prizes or cash for the most pounds of a targeted fish species. Tournaments tend to be geared towards "High End" anglers who have boats that are designed specifically for tournament fishing. The anglers tend to be better equipped than regular anglers. They generally are more highly skilled than regular anglers. Tournaments increase the sales of boats and species specific bait and tackle. These have a high potential to increase sales of fuel, tackle, and other associated items that could increase Federal Aid. However, it is believed that they would have a lesser potential to increase license sales from new anglers and increase visitations to the state parks. Tournaments are the events you see broadcast on TV.

- *Fishing Contests:* Contests generally are free or have a low cost to enter. They tend not to be based on skill but rather luck or random chance. They are geared toward "Entry Level" anglers. People don't necessarily need to be well equipped to take part or be successful in the contest. Contests are intended to encourage infrequent anglers to become more involved in fishing, or attract large numbers of anglers to one location. Contests have a high potential to increase both angler recruitment and state park visitations. Tagged fish contests and ice fishing derbies, as well as other fishing derbies, would be included in this category.

- *Fishing Clinics:* Clinics are education based and geared toward youth or non-anglers. They tend to be free to participants and may offer non-cash prizes for various skill levels. However, some private clinics charge a fee to participants. Clinics are intended to encourage recruitment of new anglers into the sport. The DWR has put a large emphasis in recent years on clinics with minimal restrictions, and will continue to encourage these types of events in the future.

Concepts For Consideration:

1. Coldwater fish tournaments

(Option 1): Should the DWR?

- a) Reinstate historical rules at Flaming Gorge and Echo Reservoirs where there was no limit to the number of contestants or the amount that can be offered in total prizes.
- b) Reinstate the statement that there may be a contest/tournament held on Echo Reservoir on Free Fishing Day.
- c) Prohibit the culling of fish.
- d) Prohibit live weigh tournaments or contests

(Option 2): Should the DWR maintain the requirements of coldwater fish tournaments as they are currently? This would entail very little control over the specifics as to how the tournament would be conducted except for the number of contestants and the amount of cash or prizes that could be awarded

2. Warm water fish tournaments

(Option 1): Should the DWR allow tournament participants to temporarily possess fish protected in length-restricted waters for the duration of specific tournaments? This would allow high publicity events comparing catch at the end of the tournament.

(Option 2): Should the DWR specify methods to weigh or measure fish at the site of capture. This would eliminate the need for participants to temporarily possess fish protected under special regulations, and still enable the contestants to weigh fish under DWR guidelines.

3. Tagged fish Contests

(Option 1): Should the DWR establish a list of waters where tagged fish contests could take place and establish guidelines to control those and other types of contests?

(Option 2): Should the DWR leave the tagged fish contest as is, which allows DWR to authorize fish tagging but no oversight on how the contest is conducted.

4. *Youth Fishing Clinics*

(Option 1): Should the DWR clearly separate clinics from all other fishing tournaments and contests and make every attempt to encourage these types of events as well as reduce the requirements necessary for them to hold a clinic?

(Option 2): Should the DWR regulate clinics and manage them as contests or tournaments?

(Option 3): Should the DWR regulate only commercial fish clinics?